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WORLD CHRONICLE

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GUEST: **HEITOR GURGULINO DE SOUZA**
Rector
United Nations University

JOURNALISTS: Bhaskar Menon, *The Times* of India
Judith Aita, USIA Press Service
James Bone, *The Times* of London

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

UN UNIVERSITY

Heitor Gurgulino de Souza, Rector of the United Nations University (UNU), outlines the various activities of this international institution. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1975, the University has published hundreds of books and studies on a wide range of important world problems and issues. UNU is not a traditional university; rather, it is a network of scholars and researchers from all over the world. Professor Gurgulino says that what makes UNU different from other universities is its global approach and understanding of world problems, and cites as an example UNU's anticipation of ethnic tensions in the post-cold war era.

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Executive Producer: Kamil Taha
Director: Ivan Stoynov
Production Assistant: Ellen McGuffie

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is WORLD CHRONICLE, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's WORLD CHRONICLE.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is WORLD CHRONICLE.

People often think of the United Nations as an organization preoccupied only with solving the world's political problems. But over the last few decades numerous United Nations organs and agencies have engaged in a wide range of activities vital to the advancement of mankind. One of them is the United Nations University, or UNU. Established in 1975, it promotes multilateral approaches to research, enhances the collaborative efforts of scholars, and broadens access to knowledge and information, particularly in developing countries.

Our guest today, Professor Heitor Gurgulino de Souza, is the Rector of the United Nations University. A national of Brazil, Professor Gurgulino will be interviewed here at United Nations headquarters in New York by Bhaskar Menon of *The Times* of India, Judith Aita of USIA Press Service, and James Bone of *The Times* of London.

Professor Gurgulino, welcome to World Chronicle. Professor, I understand that the University was the brainchild of the former Secretary-General, the late U-Thant, who, I believe, at one point hoped to become the first rector, but unfortunately became ill and died. Tell us a bit about the University. It's based in Tokyo, but you have branches elsewhere. How do you go about your duties? I mean your team, not just you yourself.

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: Well, the University, as you mentioned in the beginning, was created by the UN General Assembly to address pressing global problems of human survival, development, and welfare. And the idea was to establish precisely what it is today, a network of research and training centres and programmes that are spread throughout the world. The headquarters is in Tokyo, thanks to the generosity of the government and people of Japan, who offered to host the University and provided a large, substantial amount for the endowment fund of the University, but we have centres located in other parts of the world, in Helsinki, Maastricht, Lusaka, Ghana, Caracas, Macao and others to be set up. So here is a decentralized institution, like the United Nations in general, and we promote research, post-graduate training, the dissemination

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of knowledge and the broad issues which are in the agenda of the United Nations system.

LITTLEJOHNS: How is the rector appointed?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: The rector is appointed according to the Charter by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO after a list of five names submitted by the Council of the University from countries all over the world.

LITTLEJOHNS: Is there one particular area of research that preoccupies the University? Something -- peace, for example, or development? What is the main focus of your work?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: The focus of the work of the University has been changing over the years in view of the agenda of the United Nations system. We have been working in the areas of peace, culture, development, democracy, economics, global life support systems, problems that affect the development of developing countries through advances in science and technology, and also issues related to population dynamics and human welfare, just to give some examples of the broad types of issues that we deal with.

LITTLEJOHNS: The environment is the "flavour of the month", as they say nowadays. Are you involved in research on environmental questions?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: Precisely. This area of work that I mentioned, the global life support systems, if you analyse it properly, it was the original name given by the UNU looking at its own Charter to conserve, preserve and better utilize natural resources all over the world -- north, south, east, and west. In that sense, the environment is a fundamental area of concern to the University, and we were deeply involved in preparations and participation in the United Nations Conference for the Environment and Development that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil last year.

MENON: Professor Gurgulino, perhaps the most pressing problem we face today is to get back in touch with the realities of the world order. All realities have been unmoored because of the end of the cold war, for technological reasons, for economic reasons, reorganization around the world. Is the UN University at all addressing the larger question of how do you conceive of this new world order? What are we going into?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: We have been working on these areas through the research exercise. That means we bring together scholars, researchers, to discuss the issues from the scholars' point of view, and usually, if you're speaking of research, we're here thinking of looking forward, so we are looking at the issues which will be the problems of tomorrow. That is the way that researchers actually normally conduct their work. And this takes some time -- to examine those problems. Then after the research exercise is over, the scholars publish books, reports and policy papers, and in this process we also train young scholars to think about the same problems and see how can they bring their own perspective, especially from developing countries, into the global issues which we're facing today.

So we have been addressing issues precisely after the post-cold war era which we really began to look at before the post-cold war era -- for instance, ethnic issues. We have started research about seven, eight years ago, when not much attention was being paid to the ethnic issues. And we have published a couple of books in this area.

LITTLEJOHNS: The what? The --

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: Ethnic issues.

LITTLEJOHNS: Ethnic issues.

MENON: Is there emerging out of this, out of your work, any kind of global consensus?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: The global consensus really is the one that takes place in the United Nations General Assembly, if there is a consensus -- many times it's not there. But in the UNU, the researchers address the issues from different perspectives -- from their own background, from their own cultures, from their own regions. So in that sense, you do not always have a consensus, but what you do is to agree to look into the problems from different perspectives and present the results from your work in a collective way through books and seminars, conferences and so on, and then you put those major results into the hands of the policy makers in developing countries, in industrialized countries and in the UN system. That's how we address the issues.

AITA: Professor, when you say United Nations University, "university" has a certain connotation. From what you're saying I gather you're not a university in the traditional sense. How do people participate? I mean, do you have students?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: That's the most usual question that is raised about the University. The name "university" implies, and the original idea of U-Thant was, to have a campus where students and teachers from different parts of the world would come together. But the traditional university, older universities, do not agree with this principle. Because each university is, in their definition, universal in that sense. So the UN University was conceived as a network of scholars working together from different parts of the world, not necessarily leaving their own countries; they come for a discussion initially to plan their research, then they go back to their home base and they continue the work over there; we bring young scholars to study with them, and then in the end of the exercise we do publish the results of the research. So we don't have actual undergraduate students, we do not offer degrees at the UN University. We only have research, cooperation, and post-graduate training. In that sense, yes, we have students -- the young researchers, the graduate students in the usual university terminology; so we evolve scholars which will be then the teachers. So in that sense, yes, we have a community of teachers and graduate students. In that sense we do perform the same functions as a traditional university, which is research, training, and extension of this learning through society -- we call it dissemination function. So we share the knowledge gained in our research with scholars throughout the world.

AITA: How are you financed?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: We are totally financed by voluntary contributions. We have an endowment fund and operating contributions that are received for specific programmes and projects. This endowment fund was initiated by a $100 million grant from the government of Japan, and in addition, 49 other countries have joined by contributing funds to the University. So we now have about $262 million of pledges to the endowment fund, of which $220 million, if my memory is correct, have already been received by the University. So we utilize only the income of the endowment to finance the research and training of the University.

BONE: Professor, you seem to operate more as a think tank than as a traditional university. I wonder whether you could tell us some of the effects your research has had on actual policy of individual governments, or maybe the United Nations collectively.

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: Yes, I think the word "think tank" is probably the best way to describe the UN University. Actually, the Secretary-General, Boutros

Boutros-Ghali, when he came to Tokyo last February to open the new facilities of the headquarters of the UN University, he referred to the UNU as a think tank of the UN system. Because we were created to think of the global problems. In that sense, we examine those problems from a research point of view; as I said, we train people, young scholars, in this process; and then whatever comes out of that research exercise is shared with policy-makers, with government representatives, and with other institutions, universities and research institutes throughout the world.

I'll give one example, for instance. We have done a lot of work in food and nutrition with a very distinguished group of researchers from the United States and from developing countries. And this particular research work, after 10 years of work, has identified that the criteria for malnutrition that were utilized in the world needed to be revised, based on the research result, which involved not only the kids of the north, but also the kids of the south. As a result of this work, new standards for measuring malnutrition were adopted based on UNU research work. And the head of this research team was awarded the World Food Prize two years ago because of this work he had done at UN University. So that shows one example of work that we have done which had an important impact in developing countries.

MENON: Following up on what James asked you, I follow UN documentation here very closely, and I rarely find a UNU document that comes through either as a General Assembly or as a Security Council document. What exactly is the mechanism that you use to communicate with policy makers and with the UN itself?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: As I said, the United Nations University is no different than any university in that sense. How do you get the research, the result of the work of the scholars, into the hands of the users? Which in our case means the UN system, means governments, international organizations and the general public. So we have to reach out. The way to reach out is to publish our materials and distribute them. So we publish books; as I said, we have published through the UNU Press over 330 books. We publish five scientific journals. And in addition we report every year to the UN General Assembly, to ECOSOC, or the Second Committee, and also to UNESCO at the General Conference of UNESCO.

MENON: The documents you refer to, I mean the books that you refer to are really a wealth of knowledge. I speak from experience because I'm writing something on African development, and what I find in those books is not really found anywhere else. But my question was the documents that you just referred to are all fairly procedural

documents. The substantive knowledge that you accumulate, that your researchers accumulate, there is no mechanism to feed that into the UN, as far as I can see.

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: Yes, it goes to the UN system, as I said, of course, through the specialized agencies. As you've heard, doing something in the area of food and nutrition would be of special interest to FAO or to WHO.

LITTLEJOHNS: The Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization.

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: That's right. Particularly this area. But we do work in development and economics research. We have done an important policy paper on the recycling of the Japanese surplus, for instance, which was chaired by the late Dr. Okita, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Japan, a participant from the International Monetary Fund, and some scholars. And this particular work indicated that Japan should recycle its surplus to the benefit of developing countries and to a reactivation of the world economy. Well, that particular report was a product of the UN University. Not much is known about it, but that is one of the examples of the policy impacts of the work of the researchers.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is World Chronicle. Our guest is Professor Heitor Gurgulino de Souza, Rector of the United Nations University. Judith Aita.

AITA: Professor, there must be hundreds of thousands of universities, and the UN itself has UNITAR, the UN Institute for Training and Development, and the UN Development Programme. I think it was said that you encourage research. Is that necessary? I mean, how necessary is it considering that most of these universities do that? Are you duplicating efforts?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: No, we're not duplicating. As a matter of fact, we are cooperating with existing universities. The objective of the UNU, which is the only university of the United Nations system, is precisely to look at problems from a global perspective. You see, national universities, even those distinguished national universities of the most industrialized [countries] and traditional universities of the industrialized countries also look at broad issues, but mostly from a national perspective. The UNU brings scholars from all over the world to look at the issues from a global perspective. That's what is very unique about the United Nations University. And if it had not been

created in 1973 by the General Assembly, I'm sure there would be one created today. Because we need more and more to look at problems from a global perspective.

You mentioned environment, for instance, Mr. Littlejohns: the environment is something that concerns all countries around the world. Each country is looking at the environment from a national perspective. So we went to Rio last year, and we realized, with the heads of states at the largest summit they ever held, that there are major issues which concern all of us. Acid rain crosses the border without a passport; you have a bug that crosses the Amazon from Brazil to Venezuela and bites people and makes them blind -- they don't need a passport, either. So you have to study those issues that cut across boundary lines from the scientific disciplinary point of view. We look at the issues from a multidisciplinary point of view, because environmental issues involve economics, natural sciences, involve issues of international law, of human rights -- cut across the board. So that is one of the important roles that UNU plays, to look at the issues from a broader, multinational, multidisciplinary perspective. I think that's one of the big gains and potentials that UNU can bring when we look at the issues.

AITA: So you're saying then that -- we'll say, for example, using your example, a university in the United States or Canada is not looking at the issue of acid rain from anything other than benefit to the US? There's no -- universities don't have that kind of global reach in their research?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: National universities -- some of them have global reach, but usually they use their own scholars, and at UNU we bring scholars from different origins, from north, south, east and west, from different cultural perspectives. So we look at the issues from a very broad perspective. That is what I said in the beginning was the big advantage of the UN University, that it's the only one that can look at global issues with the participation of scholars from all over the world. In a national university in my own country or in Canada, as you mentioned, there are some scholars interested in global issues at some particular point of their work, but not necessarily looking from a global perspective. If we are looking at the issues of development and economics research, for instance, we have to bring the scholars of the north and the scholars of the south together and discuss the issues from both perspectives. This is what the UNU can do very well, and I'm very certain we are doing it, and we would like to do more, as we look at the issues in the UN agenda, be it from the *Agenda for Peace*, be it from the point of view of the environment and sustainable

development, and how to link all of these different aspects. This is what UNU can do very, very well.

BONE: Professor, you're linked to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, which has had a lot of trouble politically in the past in a fight really over its agenda between the first world and the third world. And I noticed your contributions are voluntary. I wonder whether you feel you're free to pursue your work or whether you come under political pressures to pursue one direction rather than another direction.

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: I think what you said is a fundamental element. The UNU, when created by the General Assembly, the Charter that was adopted by the UN General Assembly stressed very clearly the autonomous character of the UN University. That means that University is governed by a board of governors that we call the Council of the United Nations University, composed of individuals, 24 individuals, appointed in their individual capacity, not as representatives of member countries, although they come from 24 different countries. In addition, there are four *ex officio* members, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director General of UNESCO, the Director of UNITAR, and the Rector of the UNU. So we come from 28 different countries. But whatever we say, whatever directions and guidelines and policies adopted by the Council are taken in their autonomous way. There is no pressure from any government on the kind of research that we should conduct. Obviously, the researchers are very keen. They come from different countries and they know the policy and the political implications of their work. But there is no pressure from any government to say to the University this is what you should do. We do what the scholars recommend that we do.

MENON: One of the legacies of the cold war period is the strong link between academic communities and governments -- in particular, their national security establishments. Is this a problem that you face in an attempt to get global pictures? Do you find the national perspective impinging on research too much or too strongly?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: What we are looking at at UNU, from the point of view of the issues that I related to peace and security in the broad sense they are seen at the United Nations, is how can we bring the thinking of the scholars, what are the best ways that we can bring together to give ideas for the policy discussions of the UN agenda? Now, we look at issues from the security point of view from a very broad perspective. We had a meeting under the UNU umbrella a few years ago in Japan, in

which we brought together North Koreans and South Koreans, speaking for the first time to each other at the UNU table. This was not possible before. But we were able to bring them to discuss the issues which are on the global agenda or also in a bilateral way, but looking to learn from that experience and to extrapolate that to other regions of the world. So we can do that. We have done that in the past, and we can continue to do that.

We are looking at the issues of conflict right now, and the Secretary-General stressed the importance of this issue when he came to Tokyo in February. We are now establishing a programme, jointly, United Nations University and the University of Ulster, in Northern Ireland, to look at the problems of conflict, not only from a national perspective, but also from an international perspective. And right now we are looking for support to conduct this programme which will have not only the presence of scholars from the host university but also from other countries around the world. So that's how we look at the issues that are broadly in the UN agenda.

MENON: If I may ask a follow-up question to that, one of the problems in dealing with peace and security issues is the general tendency to treat it entirely as a military or a security problem. The whole Gandhian perspective on peace -- in other words, the espousal of active confidence-building measures at the social level, of non-violence as a viable alternative to violent solutions -- that is completely ignored in all international discussions. And people who raise it are considered to be some sort of -- to be unreal.

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: I gave the example of the University of Ulster problem; but we have done other discussions in different fora, looking at issues of peacekeeping operations from the point of view not only of military operations, but also from the other points of the involvement today of the members of the peacekeeping operations in different aspects of the work. We had a seminar that we held in our headquarters in Tokyo in which we brought the leaders of all the peacekeeping operations to explain problems, successes and difficulties they had in the carrying-out of their own work. And different angles of the problem came up. And we also had a meeting to discuss, for instance, the cross-cutting of different religions, which is, again, a different aspect that we did at the UN University. Bringing leaders of differing religions to discuss something which would be in common with all the different religions around the world. It's a very difficult issue, but we were able to do that.

So I think we in the UN University can address the issues from different perspectives, and really not only looking to one aspect, but looking at the different aspects of the same problem.

AITA: Professor, you mentioned research and nutrition and such that you could see concrete results, and maybe institutions change programmes in the developing world. In the area of peace and security, with so many wars and people dying, and such grave problems that the UN is involved in right now -- in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and on, for example -- is there anything in what the University does that's readily applicable or trying to make a difference in any of these areas in the shorter term aspect?

GURGULINO DE SOUZA: I gave the example before of the ethnic studies that the UNU has conducted. When we began to study this from the research point of view, seven or eight years ago, the ethnic issues were not in the forefront of the world agenda. Precisely because the scholars felt they already identified, in those days, in the cold war period, that there were other hidden conflicts that broad cold war issues were covering. Once the cold war was over, all of these emerging issues began to appear. So we published a couple of books on this particular area.

We feel it's important to understand the causes of conflicts, and that's something that the researchers can contribute. To see if we can anticipate before the conflicts become wars, if we can understand them better -- that would be important for mankind. We have done some studies in a seminar we held in Colombia on a different kind of conflict, which involved maybe ideological issues, criminality issues, political, local issues -- and that's a very difficult topic too. We're trying to learn from that experience, and we brought scholars from other countries around the world where similar conflicts exist, so that we can share knowledge and experience. That's the way we approach it from the UNU point of view, from an academic point of view.

Now, from the point of view of the actual implementation, there are other UN agencies which are deeply involved in these, there's humanitarian assistance and also relief efforts, and then issues that are now in the agenda of the UN Security Council, through these conflicts which are unfortunately growing throughout the world. We are trying to understand the causes of conflicts so that we can maybe eliminate that particular problem. Then we can learn from that particular study of that particular

researcher. And the conflicts are different, but there may be some common causes. We are trying to learn about that.

LITTLEJOHNS: Professor Gurgulino, that's all the time we have. You've been a very interesting guest on a subject which I think far too few people know about. Not many people are probably aware that there is such a thing as the United Nations University. Thank you for joining us on this edition of World Chronicle.

Our guest has been Professor Heitor Gurgulino de Souza, Rector of the United Nations University. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Bhaskar Menon of *The Times* of India, Judith Aita of USIA Press Service, and James Bone of *The Times* of London.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of WORLD CHRONICLE.

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